

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose of the Self-evaluation**

All state and local government entities are required by law to conduct a self-evaluation of their services, policies and practices, in accordance with Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. Sections 12131 - 12133 (Title II). The purpose of a self-evaluation is to identify services, policies and practices that do not comply with Title II requirements, and to take corrective action by making modifications to bring an entity into compliance.

### **1.2 Background**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights law designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Title II of the ADA, 42 USCS Section 12132 states in part, "no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity."

In 1992, the City and County of Honolulu (City) undertook a City-wide initial assessment of its services, programs, and activities as required by Title II resulting in a five-volume report entitled, Self Evaluation and Transition Plan (Phase I) dated April 8, 1993. The project was completed by Franklin Wong and Associates as consultants for the City and County of Honolulu. The assessment included an examination of policies and practices, facilities, and programs of the City's various departments and a review of 400+ City owned or operated sites.

As part of the self-evaluation, a Program Accessibility Survey was completed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The survey evaluated 225 park sites including regional, district, community and neighborhood parks, beach parks, botanical gardens, golf courses, and the Honolulu Zoo. Eighty-five priority projects were identified for accessibility improvements between 1993-1995 at a cost of \$10,715,850. Due to financial constraints, the number of projects was reduced, and the eighteen highest priority projects were completed during fiscal years 1994 and 1995. Prioritization of projects was based on a combination of criteria including level of usage, recreational opportunities, and geographic location. The Department of Parks and Recreation has since incorporated planning, design, and construction for ADA improvements in its six-year Capital Improvement Program.

Review of the Department's programs, activities and services at outdoor facilities such as campsites, beaches and beach amenities, picnic areas, etc. was not included in the 1992 plan because design guidelines for outdoor recreation facilities had not been adopted.

In March 1997, the Department of Parks and Recreation updated its Transition Plan and distributed copies for review and comment to the Commission on Persons with Disabilities, thirty Neighborhood Boards, the Honolulu City Council, twenty-five organizations working with persons with disabilities, the State Library System, and the City's Municipal Reference and Records Center. The plan identifies thirty-three priority projects for fiscal years 1997 through 2001. The plan received generally favorable comments.

In 1995, the Department of Parks and Recreation's Beach Access Task Force was assembled at the direction of Mayor Jeremy Harris. The purpose of the task force was to provide beach access to persons with disabilities at six beaches around Oahu. A pilot project placed all-terrain wheelchairs and beach mats (providing stable surfacing for ordinary wheelchair access) at selected locations. The task force final report with recommendations was completed in December 1997. Comments and recommendations from the task force are included in the report of the Park Maintenance and Recreation Services Division found in Section 6.14.

In 1997, the Department of Parks and Recreation formed an ADA Committee composed of staff representatives from each division of the Department. In the same year, an Access Advisory Council comprised of disabled individuals and representatives from agencies working with disabled persons was formed to assist the Department in resolving issues relating to and improving access to DPR's programs and services. Organizations which participate in the Access Advisory Council include the following: Commission on Persons with Disabilities, Kapiolani Community College, Special Parent Information Network, and Association of Retarded Citizens. Both groups voiced the need for the Department of Parks and Recreation to complete a more comprehensive self-evaluation of its programs and services.

### **1.3 Scope of 1999 Self Evaluation Update**

This self-evaluation report evaluates areas of programs, services, and practices of the Department of Parks and Recreation which includes the Department's assessment of its current policies, practices and procedures relating to cultural,

recreational and other leisure-time activities provided by the Department. It presents the findings of the self-evaluation and makes recommendations for ensuring compliance with Title II.

The self-evaluation examines four major areas 1) general policies and practices; 2) communication; 3) program access; and 4) employment. It is a comprehensive review of programs and services as implemented by this Department including the following divisions:

1. Office of the Director (OD)
2. Management Services Division (MS)
3. Personnel Services Office (PSO)
4. Park Maintenance and Recreation Services Division (PMRS)
5. Beautification Division, including Botanic Gardens (B/HBG)
6. Maintenance Support Services Division (MSS)